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**Testimony before the Select Committee on Children
Re: H.B. 5026**

My name is Sherry Linton, the Early Care and Education Policy Analyst of Connecticut Association for Human Services (CAHS), which is dedicated to ending poverty in Connecticut and ensuring that all families have the tools they need to achieve economic security. **I am here to testify in favor of H.B. 5026, an act implementing the Governor's budget recommendations regarding education.**

- Regarding Section 5.Subdivision (2) of subsection (b) of section 10-16q of the supplement to the general statutes, while the updated language of the bill recognizes the need to provide an increase in the reimbursement rates of School Readiness providers, means to attaining those raised rates is inconsistent among programs and also not a dependable source of funds.
- The language for this bill indicates that in order for providers to receive increases, there would have to be unexpended funds for each fiscal year, therefore the provider is left to potentially have to choose between filling available slots and increasing their reimbursement. This act clearly places providers between 'a rock and a hard place.'
- If the Governor truly expects all children to be "Ready by Five and Fine by Nine," there has to be means for families to have affordable care and means for providers to provide **quality** care. Providers are not able to provide quality care if their rate of reimbursement will fluctuate with each fiscal year.
- Reasonable rates need to be established to School Readiness, Head Start, and State Funded Centers, rates that are not dependant on unexpended funds. To provide a base rate that could, but may not be raised, based upon unexpended funds in the second half of the fiscal year, with the limitation of only using half of the unexpended funds to increase rates, is certainly not a means to developing a system of quality care settings.
- As we embark on the establishment of a Quality Rating and Improvement System for care, we need to commit to realistic rate increases that are in alignment with the expected quality. It is not productive to establish bars of quality without the needed resources.